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to have been the key factor in the abandonment of the earlier methods of hunting buffalo. The situation of the Gros Ventres in regard to horses, which had apparently been so bad in approximately the first two decades of the 19th century, gradually improved, according to our informants, by natural increase of the few horses they had and by successful raiding of the enemy, especially for the fast buffalo horse. If Bradley's figures are correct, the Gros Ventres averaged five horses per family in 1830. According to our informants, by about 1850 they had "lots of horses," but we know that, even so, the number of horses fluctuated considerably after that date. Coming Daylight, for instance, remembered clearly several times prior to 1880 when the whole tribe was relatively poor in horses. During these periods people were forced to cache as much as possible so they wouldn't be too heavily burdened as they traveled about on foot. No doubt the same factors were operative in the Gros Ventre area as obtained in Blackfoot territory—severe winters and skin diseases among the horses.[1]

In any case, even in relatively prosperous times, seldom if ever did an individual possess great herds such as are described for the Kiowa. The Boy stated that his father, Lame Bull, who was an outstanding man, had a herd of about 60 horses. Coming Daylight explained: "Each family kept its own little bunch of horses. In early morning they would be taken out to pasture, usually by the older boys; around the middle of the day they would be watered and driven out again; in the evening they would be brought back and the more valuable ones, the swift buffalo horses, were always kept tied close by at night in case of raid by the enemy."

Such a family-owned herd would be differentiated and would ideally include pack horses, riding horses, and a few buffalo horses. The right of disposal over his own horses was, however, recognized for each individual man, woman and child. A man had the possibility of augmenting his own holdings directly by raiding the enemy. Because of the social recognition attendant upon successful raiding, as well as the economic necessity for controlling the means of production, the individual might actually devote in the course of a year more time and energy in pursuing this objective

[1] For an excellent discussion of the whole problem, see Ewers, 1943.

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231 556 than in the actual production of raw materials. This was especially true of the young unmarried man who, though his ability to hunt was important, was even more anxious to establish his reputation for bravery.

Food

262 The Gros Ventres met their need for food very largely, but not exclusively, through a meat diet. Flesh of the buffalo was the meat par excellence and was considered by the Gros Ventres their "real food." To those who had been brought up on buffalo meat, beef was a poor substitute. It was said, by those who experienced the change of diet after the disappearance of the buffalo in 1884, that many of the older people "died of starvation" when deprived of buffalo meat. The Gros Ventres refused for a long time to accustom themselves to beef because "beef, even when fresh, smells so badly, and when we would see oxen slobber it turned our stomachs."

Buffalo meat, either fresh or dried, formed a major part of the dietary the year round. Each man had his own preference as to various parts of the buffalo. Charles Buckman, for instance, liked best the flanks, if fat, but some preferred the brisket. The tenderest part was the hump (withers) and the tenderloin was also a delicacy. Roast ribs, a whole rib for each person, were considered a most succulent feast and the embryo was highly appreciated. It was customary to eat raw the liver and manifolds dipped in blood and to drink some of the fresh blood. Nothing of the buffalo was wasted and every possible part was eaten even to the predigested vegetable food from the stomach and the soft inner part of the hoofs. The coagulated milk from a buffalo cow carrying young or nursing a calf was enjoyed by most, although it was reported that some individuals did not care particularly for it. The [251] guts were cleaned, dried, cooked and put away, and the lungs were sliced and dried. To be eaten with dried meat the back fat was cooked, and tallow was used in like manner. The bones were broken and boiled, and, after the grease was skimmed off and 252 stored, the bone broth was used plain or with either blood or 262 berries therein.

Pemmican was made from the base of the tenderloin, a long

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on the part of the men for supplying the raw materials. This, however, was more than offset by the fact that the time consumed in producing the raw materials was less than that required to process and complete the manufacture thereof. The following calculation will give at least a rough approximation of the situation. It was estimated by our Gros Ventre informants that one woman would be able to dress about twenty robes a season, i.e., robes taken in the fall hunt and dressed with the fur on. This means she had to devote the equivalent of 60 full days' time to this task alone.[7] Actually she would not be free to work on robes exclusively, as she had to dress other kinds of skins, carry on her ordinary daily routine of procuring fuel and water, care of children, preparation of the daily meals, and in addition cut the enormous quantities of meat to be dried for winter consumption.[8] In contrast, if we can rely on Hornaday's figures, 15–25 men killed about a thousand buffalo in a fall season,[9] which means, taking the higher figure, one man alone would average more than two women could handle.

Value

Given the abundant supply of game, especially of buffalo, and the methods of exploiting it, the individual who controlled the relatively scarce means of production was in a position to command a larger labor supply and consequently to produce a larger surplus. The Boy summed up the situation thus: "The Gros Ventres in their old way of life used to want a lot of horses because they knew from experience that if a man had a lot of horses he could acquire a little wealth and position in life. If, for instance, a family had a lot of horses, the man might have three or four or five buffalo horses with which to chase game and would bring in lots of skins and meat and could afford more wives, and the more wives he had the bigger and wealthier he would be. He could have

[7] Denig, pp. 540–41, estimates three days' work to prepare one robe for market and states that the preparation of 25 to 30 robes was an excellent winter's work for one woman, with the average at 18 to 20 robes.

[8] Hornaday, p 436, states that a whole buffalo cow, if economically worked up, yields about 55 lbs. of pemmican and 45 lbs. of dried meat.

[9] Hornaday, p. 465.

556 231 a great big lodge and all the other things that were required. But some men might have only one horse and therefore only one wife. Such men wouldn't amount to much; they would be by-passed all the time and couldn't get anywhere. Therefore men did really desperate things in order to obtain horses."[10]

556 231 735 Horses were thus the most valuable item in Gros Ventre economy. Other informants illustrated this attitude. Garter Snake, for instance, stated: "As a little girl I didn't know poverty. My parents were rich. They had everything they wanted for their lodge, and clothing, and all kinds of horses so I was never in want at any time. Nevertheless, my father, when he was a little fellow, was very poor and had no horse to ride. Possibly somebody would put his mother, who was a widow, on a horse, but he would have to walk. He had hardly any clothes, he was so poor. One time when he was about 12, the camp was moving and they were going to go quite a distance. He was way behind because he would wait until everybody had gone, and then would follow as best he could. This day he went up on a hill to see where the people were camping next, and then he just lay there crying because he pitied himself for being so poor. It was at this time that he was granted his first experience [with the supernatural]. Later on, having made an offering of a black shirt and some feathers, which he had begged from someone at the camp, and having cut off the first joint of the little finger of his left hand, he was told in a vision: 'Son, I invited you here and I am glad you came. Look over that way (the direction in which the camps lay). You are poor now, but see those camps? You are going to be noted there. Everyone there is going to respect you and depend on you. And look this way (the opposite direction). See that big band of horses? Those are your horses. Of course you won't get them right away, but that is what you are going to have.' He was granted many powers later on, among them how to operate with a woodpecker feather; how to check hemorrhage; how to cure stoppage of the male urinary tract; how to cure consumption; how to revive a horse which was 'played out'; how to make raiders invisible so they could successfully steal horses. And he finally attained those horses he had been shown."

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[10] Cf. Denig, p. 505, "An Indian with one wife cannot amass property."

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The above case illustrates how it was possible for a man, in spite of a poor start in life, to rise. Children were instructed by their elders, as was Thick by his maternal uncle: "Above all things try to have horses. Try to have property and whatever you have, take care of it. By having lots of horses and property, people will respect you and look upon you as somebody." 556 867

Again Coming Daylight stated: "They used to think more of horses than of anything else. They were sure proud of owning a pinto pony. In telling stories when they wanted to describe the best they could think of they would say: 'You should have seen her horse—it was a big pinto pony.'" And in telling of a relative of hers, Woman Chief, Coming Daylight said: "Her husband was not very handsome, but they were well-to-do and she always rode top horses." 554 231

While all horses were as a rule well cared for, special attention was devoted to the buffalo horses. On the hunt for instance, these horses would be led along unburdened by pack or rider to keep them fresh. They were ridden only for the actual chase and after the kill were turned loose to roll around and graze like young colts. When the butchering was completed the meat was packed on other horses and the swift buffalo horses were then led home again. These horses were ridden on social and ceremonial occasions, when their owners wished to show off, and of course the soldier societies were well mounted, but such use amounted to no more than a good work-out, and these valuable horses were never abused nor wilfully exhausted. 231

Children were exhorted to take care of their property, especially of horses, and the girls were advised that "a mare is worth everything—it increases—treat her well." It was stated that some attention was given to breeding. A man might judge that a colt showed possibilities of becoming a fast horse. If it fulfilled the early promise the colts it sired would be watched. The less likely of these would be castrated. Likewise, a good mare would, if possible, be retained by the owner for breedng. A man who owned a particularly good buffalo horse might on his deathbed, either order that it be killed at his grave or give it to some relative he knew cared well for horses, with instructions never to abuse it nor give it away. [867] [763 768 431]

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231 721 got scared and ran to the other side of the horse. Finally she took a big stick and threw it at the white thing and still it didn't move so she went closer and found it to be a Hudson's Bay blanket just soaking wet. The enemy must have used it when they crossed the river. So she dragged it home to her lodge. When she got there she called to her grandmother: 'Is he there?' Her grandmother said: 'He is.' She was still furious at her husband and called to him: 'Come out! I am giving you this,' and she said it in the way people speak when they are giving something on return from war. She was giving her husband his own buffalo horse! He however didn't say anything or make any exclamation. This so enraged her that she took the blanket and rolled it up as small as she could and threw it at him, hitting him on the chest saying: 'Here is another thing I brought you!' Then he laughed. But she had at least saved one of the most valuable horses.

[431] "The next morning the rest of the Gros Ventres in the party moved on, leaving this family behind. But fortunately some others came along and seeing their plight gave them horses, for example, Pemmican gave one to Coming Daylight, Little Shields gave her uncle one, and Sleeping Bear gave her husband one."

231 436 The importance of various transactions could be gauged by whether or not a horse were included, other things such as fancy clothing, ornaments, guns, etc. being mentioned as "thrown in."

[554] A person who gave a horse in whatever connection accrued prestige for himself and at the same time showed in what esteem the donor

[583] held the recipient. Horses were generally included in the bride price; in inaugurating the more serious type of enemy-friendship; in payment for services of the medicine man in curing certain types of illness, and in payment to the ceremonial grandfather as well as in payment to the namer or ear-piercer of a child; in settling disputes; in gambling; in gifts to others in honor of relatives, and in meeting certain other kinship obligations.

231 556 Horses could be acquired by a man through raiding the enemy; by gift from relatives and from non-relatives in honor of someone else or in instituting the enemy-friendship; in the bride price of a sister, daughter, or maternal niece; in payment for services rendered; in gambling; through inheritance; in trading with the whites. A woman might share in the bride price of her brother's

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daughter, and might receive gifts from relatives, but would otherwise have few opportunities of obtaining horses.

In former times the rules regarding inheritance were fairly simple. If a man died, his relatives took the more valuable livestock, while anyone was free to come into the lodge and take any other personal property of the deceased which was not to be buried with him. The man's relatives would not, however, take the horses which belonged to his wife or wives, or which had been given before his death to his children. When a woman died she usually would have little valuable property in any case, but, again, any other woman might rush in and strip the lodge of whatever personal property might be therein, including food. The close family of the deceased were "so grief-stricken that they wouldn't notice who takes what," and "a husband would never keep anything of his wife's." It was said, too, that "women were braver than men in disposing of their property before death, and often gave gifts of personal property to those they wished to have them."

In objects derived from the white man, the value put upon them was mainly utilitarian. For example, in matching wagers on one occasion a man put up a gold watch. There was no one on the other side who had a watch to offer, but a spy-glass was considered the equivalent. It was explained that the value of the watch in dollars--whether it had a fine gold case or not--would not be taken into consideration. The question in matching was to find things of equal value to the Indian in his way of life. To illustrate this The Boy told of a gift to his father, Lame Bull, from a white trader on the Saskatchewan, of a hobble which locked. "Perhaps this didn't have a high value in dollars, but it was considered extremely valuable by Lame Bull because it saved him many a race horse. Even though the enemy might sneak a horse out of camp, being unable to unfasten the hobble, he would have to abandon the valuable horse before getting very far away."

On the other hand, while utility was certainly an important consideration in the Gros Ventres' evaluation of goods produced by themselves, various other elements were taken into account. A horse procured from the enemy was perhaps the most valuable of all things to the Gros Ventres; aside from other considerations, a man would have risked his life to obtain it and that in itself lent

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778 426 'Wife, I transfer this power to you. You go and doctor this time. I don't feel like doctoring today.' But before this she would have always accompanied him in his curing practice and knew exactly what to do and sing." Such a "transfer" was purely an *ad hoc* delegation, not a surrender of his power.

Power could be completely lost by the owner either during his lifetime or at death. During the owner's lifetime it could be lost by persistent disuse, by complete and final transfer through sale or gift, by "using it up," and as a result of breach of the rules. Where, for instance, a man had power to cure only a limited number of people, say four, with the conclusion of his fourth cure, the power was "used up" and so ceased. A certain Gros Ventre who had power to cause rain and storms made much use of it in a battle with the Crow but finally used it up and was killed by them.

If a person with power had not transferred it, on his deathbed the power embodied in or associated with some material object or living thing within him would come out of him, usually out of his mouth, and so his power would die with him. Even though the root or medicine he had used but had not transferred was known to others, they would not be allowed after his death to use it in curing. Thus lots of good medicines were not used, even though they were known to be efficacious.

Use of Powers

778 We now come to rites and procedures followed in the exercise of powers for war, gambling, love and various miscellaneous purposes, including legerdemain. A consideration of the use of the very important doctoring power is reserved for separate treatment in a subsequent chapter.

The great majority of those who went out in quest of power sought power to be great warriors and to become wealthy. The two aims were ordinarily closely related. A major goal of most [721 war parties was the acquisition of horses,—the chief wealth of ●556] the Gros Ventres in the old days. Both success in war and possession of wealth brought prestige, and such prestige in the individualistic competitive culture of the Gros Ventre was eagerly sought after.

War power usually included both a positive aspect, outstanding success in killing, wounding and capturing enemies and in taking booty, especially horses, and a negative one, luck in escaping injury. Little Man's brother had power to make his horse run so fast in war that no other horse could overtake it.

Those who sought wealth power asked mostly to have many horses, not to be poor, and "to get things easy without much effort."

"My grandmother's brother," Coming Daylight related, "the first Crow Bull went to McCann Butte in the Bear Paws to sleep. The people were camped at the bottom near the lake, and from an opening in the mountains on the other side of the lake they saw a lot of white horses come to the lake. Crow Bull was told in his dream: 'These are all your horses.' It is claimed that everybody else saw them too. After that Crow Bull always had white horses. People gave him white horses and he brought white horses home from war."

Cora Chandler had heard a similar story about Bear Nose who slept at the same spot. He saw (in a dream, probably) a lot of prairie dogs and was told: "These are your horses." Cora commented: "I knew the day when Bear Nose had only buckskin horses,"—of the color of prairie dogs.

On both the preceding cases, the two men who got power only to own all these horses, although, Cora thought, Bear Nose also had lots of other powers.

As regards war-power ritual we gathered only a few details, mostly from Al Chandler regarding his adoptive father, Little Man, and from Garter Snake regarding her father, Bull Lodge.

Little Man got from his brother who was killed in battle the latter's war medicine. The brother's power objects were: the dried skin of a sparrow hawk [Flaco Sparverius] with the head, claws and feathers; a shirt, tailored like an ordinary shirt, but kept painted yellow all the time and with "little holes all over it even on the sleeves and with hawk feathers on the shoulders and some on the back." The yellow paint and holes presumably symbolized the predominant rufous and buff coloring and spotted belly and sides of this fast flier. When the brother went to war, he would put this dried hawk skin on his back, and take a "little fuzzy feather" from the wing and tie it on his horse's tail, and the power

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you are not feeling well and someone brings you medicine, say, medicine to clear you out after childbirth, and you have nothing else to give the person, just give a dish of food.'" Coming Daylight, who was not a professional doctor, was called about 1928 to attend a childbirth and, when ready to leave after looking after the mother in every way, was given a big sack of flour, a small sack of sugar, and five dollars in cash. Mary Ereaux, in speaking of the two roots given to Coming Daylight by the latter's grandmother to hasten childbirth and to bring the mother's milk quickly, remarked: "They say that if it [either of these roots] is given to an outsider [not a close relative of Coming Daylight], the recipient must pay, else it wouldn't be any good." "Last winter [1939-40]," Mary Ereaux said on another occasion, "I had a cold. An old lady picked some roots for me and I gave her potatoes and eggs in place of this medicine. They believe such medicine does not work if you don't pay for it, no matter how easy it is to gather the particular medicine."

A payment or fee was always expected by the professional doctor for his or her services, unless again the patient was a close relative. The doctor had commonly "paid" well in hardship or goods to acquire his power; he expected to be paid well in turn. And even though he had acquired ownership of it, not the hard way by quest or purchase, but by spontaneous offer from some being or by free gift from some relative, he still "paid" in shortened life and in restrictions on freedom. Doctors did not make their whole living from their practice but the fees received by them, especially by "great" doctors, were substantial additions to income and wealth. This economic goal loomed large in the consciousness of the people and of the professional doctor. When, for instance, Bad Bad Bull's sister refused his offer to her of power to cure stomach sickness, people said to her: "You should have accepted this power and so have gotten a lot of things for curing this disease." Doctoring was an avenue to wealth and to the ease and prestige that came with wealth, but in general was not practiced by the young. It was, however, a form of "old age insurance."

Sometimes professional doctors named their fee before accepting a case. "Give me this or that, and I'll doctor you." At other times